THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House to the extent possible.

Micro finance institutions for rural areas

1910. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is planning to set up new financial institutions for looking after its micro finance activities largely benefiting rural artisans, craftsperson and agriculturists;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise, especially in Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh; and

(c) the present status of such people in the country especially in Telangana districts?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (c) The Government has introduced a Bill in Lok Sabha on 20.03.2007 called "The Micro Financial Sector (Development and Regulation) Bill, 2007" to create environment friendly policy for micro-finance services in the country. The Bill is intended to provide a formal statutory framework for the promotion, development and regulation of the micro finance sector. As of now, there is no plan of the Government to establish any micro finance institution.

However, a large number of micro finance organisations in the private sector are operational across the country, including Telangana, and provide micro credit services to the disadvantaged sections of the population including artisans, craftsmen and agriculturists.

Investment by private provident funds

1911. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government proposes to allow Private Provident Funds (FFs) to invest money in equity funds;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what is the position in this regard of other PFs?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (c) The pattern of investment notified by Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance *vide* 5(53)/2002-ECB and PR on 24.1.2005 allows investment *inter-alia*, in equity and mutual funds. The Central Board of Trustees, Employees Provident Fund has, however decided that no investments will be made in equities and/or equity mutual funds. Rule 67 of the Income Tax Rules 1962 as amended by Income tax (Twenty Third Amendment) Rules 2005 lays down the investment pattern to be followed by the recognized provident funds.

Free ATM access for all

1912. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has any proposal to offer free Automated Teller Machine (ATM) access to all;